



# MANAGING MOUNTAIN LION PROBLEMS

Mountain lions (*Felis Concolor*) are the largest native North American cat except for the slightly larger jaguar. Mountain lions are known by a number of different names - cougar, panther, catamount and puma. They are primarily nocturnal, shy, elusive and solitary (except during the breeding season and when young are traveling with the female). They are very fast animals over a short distance, but because of relatively small lung capacity, cannot run great distances. They are agile tree climbers. Males are generally larger than females, averaging 130 to 150 pounds in weight and ranging in length from 72 to 90 inches. Females average 65 to 90 pounds. Pads on the forefeet are larger than those on the hind feet. Heel pads on both the fore- and hind feet have a distinctive three-lobed appearance. Claw-marks seldom show in the tracks of this species.



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## BIOLOGY

Mountain lions are mainly nocturnal, preferring to hunt at night. Deer are their favorite prey. They have also been known to prey on beaver, porcupines, rabbits, skunks, domestic livestock, pets and other small mammals, birds, and even fish. Dens can be found in any concealed, sheltered spot. Male mountain lions roam widely, females less widely, especially when the cubs are small. Adult male home ranges often encompass more than 100 square miles. Adult males use their hind feet to scrape duff into a small pile to declare their territory. These "scrapes" or "scratches" are often 6 to 18 inches long and 6 to 12 inches wide. Females generally occupy ranges from 20 to 60 square miles. Females breed first at two or three years of age, then every 18 to 20 months thereafter. Young may

be born at any time of the year. Gestation period is 88 to 97 days. Litters range from one to six, generally two or three. Juvenile markings (spots) generally disappear by fifteen months.

## DAMAGE

Mountain lions are significant predators of sheep, goats, cattle, horses, house cats, dogs and poultry in some areas of California. Damage is often random and unpredictable, but when it occurs, large numbers of livestock can be killed in short periods of time, a behavior known as surplus killing.

## DISEASE

Generally speaking, the mountain lion seems to be relatively free from ecto-parasites. Rabies, feline leukemia and Lyme disease have been documented in California mountain lions.

## PROBLEM PREVENTION

Mountain lions are often attracted to urban/suburban situations by easy prey items such as domestic pets/animals and deer that live in these areas. Younger mountain lions, dispersing from fully occupied mountain lion habitat, may also end up in these areas, trying to establish their own territories. In the rural areas of California, mountain lion range commonly overlaps livestock grazing land. To prevent predation of domestic livestock or pets by mountain lions, exclusion, using heavy woven wire fencing at least ten feet high is required. Overhead fencing is necessary for complete and permanent

protection. Removal of brush and trees within ¼ mile of buildings or livestock/pet enclosures may help reduce depredations because mountain lions prefer to hunt and stay where escape cover is readily available. Bright lights, strobe lights, loud music or other recordings, barking dogs and moveable scarecrows in depredation areas may help repel mountain lions. To decrease the attractiveness of your property to mountain lions, everything should be done to discourage potential prey animals, particularly deer, from living on your property or nearby. This includes landscaping with plants not attractive to deer, removing dense or low-lying vegetation that could hide a mountain lion or provide habitat for other potential prey species, and not feeding wildlife to attract them.

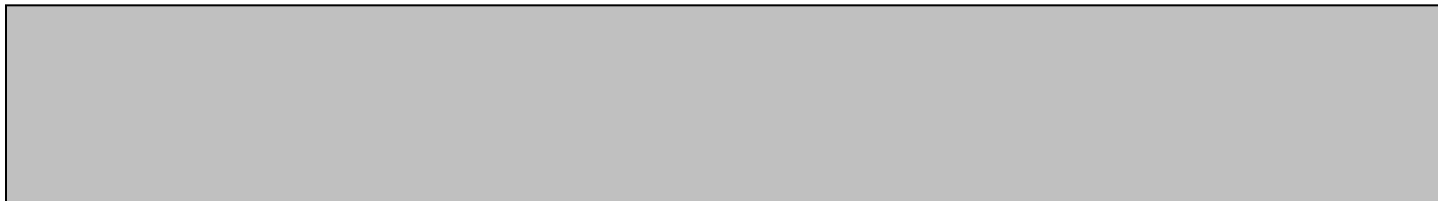
## HUMAN SAFETY

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife provides a brochure titled "Living with California Mountain Lions" which suggests the following things to do if you encounter a mountain lion:

1. Don't hike alone: Go in groups, with adults supervising children.
2. Keep the children close to you: Observations of captured wild mountain lions reveal that the animals seem especially drawn to children. Keep children within your sight at all times.
3. Do not approach a mountain lion: Most mountain lions will try to avoid a confrontation. Give them a way to escape.
4. Do not run from a mountain lion: Running may stimulate a mountain lion's instinct to chase. Instead, stand and face the animal. Make eye contact. If you have small children with you, pick them up if possible so they don't panic and run. Although it may be awkward, pick them up without bending over or turning away from the mountain lion.
5. Do not crouch down or bend over: In Nepal, a researcher studying tigers and leopards watched the big cats kill cattle and domestic water buffalo while ignoring humans standing nearby. He surmised that a human standing up is just not the right shape for a cat's prey. On the other hand, a person squatting or bending over looks a lot like a four-legged prey animal. If you are in mountain lion country, avoid squatting, crouching or bending over.
6. Do all you can to appear larger: Raise your arms; open your jacket if you are wearing one; pick up small children; throw stones, branches or whatever you can reach without crouching or turning your back; wave your arm slowly and speak firmly in a loud voice. The idea is to convince the mountain lion that you are not prey and that you may be a danger to it.

## LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The Department of Fish and Wildlife may remove or take any mountain lion or authorize an appropriate local agency with public safety responsibility to remove or take any mountain lion that is perceived to be an imminent threat to public health or safety. For further information on the legal status of mountain lions or assistance with a mountain lion depredation problem, contact your local California Department of Fish and Wildlife office.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE ANIMAL CARE CENTER CLOSEST TO YOU:**

<b>AGOURA ACC</b> 29525 Agoura Rd. Agoura, CA 91301 (818) 991-0071	<b>BALDWIN PARK ACC</b> 4275 N. Elton Baldwin Park, CA 91706 (626) 962-3577	<b>CARSON ACC</b> 216 W. Victoria St. Gardena, CA 90248 (310) 523-9566
<b>CASTAIC ACC</b> 31044 N. Charlie Canyon Rd. Castaic, CA 91384 (661) 257-3191 or (818) 367-8065	<b>DOWNEY ACC</b> 11258 S. Garfield Ave. Downey, CA 90242 (562) 940-6898	<b>LANCASTER ACC</b> 5210 W. Ave. I Lancaster, CA 93536 (661) 940-4191